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Letter dated 4 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

It is my honour to transmit herewith the national report of the United States of America, entitled "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women", for the annual ministerial review to be held during the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2010 of the Economic and Social Council (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would distribute the present letter and its annex as a document of the Council, under item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Susan E. **Rice**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/2010/100.

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Annex to the letter dated 4 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Voluntary national presentation of the United States of America: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women

> Gender-inclusive development is the right way to do business — for donor countries, developing countries, non-governmental organizations and the private sector

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Summary

The United States of America is committed to and has a long-standing history of working towards achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls through its humanitarian, development and diplomacy work. The policies and programmes of the United States Government promote the advancement of women and girls in developing and transitional countries, not only because it is a moral imperative, but also because promoting women's rights and empowerment are critical components of effective development globally. The United States Government also recognizes that gender equality and women's empowerment are necessary for the achievement of all of the Millennium Development Goals. As a result, the United States Government integrates gender concerns in economic growth, agriculture, democracy and governance, education, global health and humanitarian assistance programmes. In addition, the United States implements programmes on gender-based violence, women's legal rights, exploitive child labour and combating trafficking in persons. The United States Government seeks to engage men and boys as active agents of change to reduce gender inequalities and to change attitudes and behaviours.

The Obama Administration is strongly committed to further elevating the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment, and gender is reflected in the new Presidential initiatives on food security and on global health, discussed in the present report. The Administration has created a White House Council on Women and Girls, appointed an Adviser on Violence against Women and an Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the State Department.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the principal international development agency of the United States Government, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a recently created innovative United States foreign aid agency, are the two government entities which focus solely on providing foreign assistance to developing countries. Other United States agencies which also engage in international work include: Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Justice, Labor, State and Treasury; Office of the United States Trade Representative; Overseas Private Investment Corporation; Peace Corps; and United States Trade and Development Agency.

A. Introduction: framing gender within development and diplomacy

1. Gender Equality is central to the ongoing work of the United States to elevate development as a key pillar of the United States Government's foreign policy. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton underscored this principle on 12 March 2010 during the session of the Commission on the Status of Women, noting that women were, by and large, the people who grew and prepared the world's food, collected the water, gathered the firewood, washed the clothes and, increasingly, worked in the factories, ran the shops, launched the businesses and created jobs. Further, women were powerful forces for any country's economic growth and social progress, so development strategies must reflect their roles and the benefits that they bring.

2. Development dollars spent on girls and women is money spent wisely. Empirical studies show that women pay in advance for their training by teaching

others; they act as multipliers by reinvesting in their communities. Women reinvest an average of 90 per cent of their income in their families, compared to a 30 to 40 per cent reinvestment rate for men.[1]

3. A gender-inclusive approach to development is one that recognizes that women's issues affect everyone. The condition of women in their societies is directly linked to a nation's level of development and security. It recognizes that no country can get ahead if one half of its population is left behind, and that addressing the needs of women and girls improves the lives of everyone — men and women, boys and girls — in every country around the world. For the United States, *gender-inclusive development is the right way to do business — for donor countries, developing countries, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.*

4. At the same time, the United States recognizes that the path towards the empowerment of women and girls also requires moving beyond projects that focus solely on them by ensuring that gender analyses inform consultations, design, implementation and monitoring of all development investments. It is important to expand our focus beyond the traditional sectors (education and health) in which there have been significant advances for women and girls, and beyond the traditional issues (gender-based violence and human trafficking) which are often the symptoms, not the causes, of foundational inequalities. This requires that we also address the legal, policy and cultural constraints that create barriers to full participation, and that we ensure that all sectors which have an impact upon economic development (infrastructure, transport, agricultural value chains) fully incorporate women's practical needs and strategic interests.

5. We also recognize that men and boys, too, can be negatively impacted by gender norms and cultural expectations, and that a gender-inclusive approach is the most sustainable.

B. United States contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in developing countries

Millennium Development Goals in United States Development Policy

6. The United States strongly supports partnerships with developing countries, other donors, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the pursuit of all of the Millennium Development Goals, including those on gender equality. In January 2009, Secretary Clinton declared that the foreign policy objectives of the Obama Administration in Africa were rooted in security, political, economic and humanitarian interests, and included working aggressively to reach the Millennium Development Goals in health, education and economic opportunity. President Barack Obama expanded on this point in his address to the General Assembly in September 2009, stating that the United States had fully embraced the Millennium Development Goals. United States programmes abroad in economic growth, trade capacity-building, agriculture and food security, education, health, climate and environment and gender equality, as well as the United States relief and emergency assistance efforts in States affected by conflict and disaster, such as Haiti, contribute both directly and indirectly to achieving all of

[1] Phil Borges, *Women Empowered: Inspiring Change in the Emerging World* (New York, Rizzoli International Publications, 2007), p.13.

the Millennium Development Goals. The efforts of the United States Government efforts to promote democracy and good governance (including economic governance), protect worker rights, and eliminate exploitive child and forced labour and human trafficking help to create the environments necessary to achieve the Goals.

7. The United States considers that the Millennium Development Goals have played a catalytic role in guiding and uniting donors and partners towards realizing the crucial goals of reducing poverty and hunger, improving health and education outcomes, combating major diseases, and promoting sustainable development. The United States celebrates the progress that developing countries have made and seeks innovative approaches to promote and sustain development efforts. United States assistance emphasizes making Millennium Development Goal gains sustainable by promoting inclusive economic growth, job creation, capacity-building, and institutional development in the developing countries in which United States Government agencies work. The United States also seeks to advance the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through innovation, for example, the development and application of new and existing technologies which address human development needs. A key priority is working with host country Governments and partners to develop strategies which truly empower women and strive for broad-based economic growth that engages trade and investment policies alongside development spending.

8. Development assistance cannot achieve its goals without a strong commitment by host country Governments and an enabling environment for economic growth and prosperity. The United States Government is increasingly targeting its official development assistance (ODA) to supporting national development plans and capacity-building such that development goals are sustainable. United States ODA in 2009 was at the highest level for any country in history, totalling $28.7 billion in 2009 — a $1.8 billion, or 7 per cent, increase from the previous year. We continue to look for ways to make development assistance more effective and development gains more sustainable. We are committed to moving forward towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the spirit of mutual responsibility and accountability.

Integrating gender into new Presidential initiatives

9. The United States Government believes in a holistic approach to the Millennium Development Goals that encompasses gender-inclusive development and puts women at the front and centre in development work.[2] The best way we can achieve the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment (often referred to as Millennium Development Goal 3) is by including women in all aspects of our development initiatives and by ensuring that gender differences and inequalities that limit the participation of, and benefits to, women and girls are addressed broadly in development work. The United States Government understands that in order to measure how well it is addressing women's health, economic opportunities, access to education and food security, including access to the benefits of large infrastructural development, it is important to disaggregate and analyse performance data from foreign assistance programmes to ensure that projects serve the needs and

[2] "Development in the twenty-first century", remarks made by United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, at the Center for Global Development, Washington, D.C., 6 January 2010.

interests of both women and men. In addition to being beneficiaries of development and diplomacy, it is important to remember that women are active agents of change. Women need to be at the decision table throughout the development planning and implementation process. Gender-inclusive programmes should integrate gender analyses in all aspects, from policy to implementation and evaluation, to ensure that women are central to the development process. In a variety of ways in its partner countries, including funding scholarships and training, the United States is preparing more women to benefit from and take leadership roles in development efforts at the local, regional and national levels.

10. New Presidential initiatives with a cross-cutting theme of gender integration have been created in two key priority areas for the United States: food security and health. In April 2009, President Obama underscored the commitment of the United States to assist the world's poorest by pledging to double funding for agricultural development to more than $1 billion (an amount that has since been raised to $3.5 billion). Subsequently, the United States proposed the Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative. In May 2009, the President also announced the six-year, $63 billion comprehensive Global Health Initiative. These initiatives in critical Millennium Development Goals sectors, described in more detail below, demonstrate strong United States commitment to and support for gender-inclusive development to achieve the Goals.

11. President Obama's Global Health Initiative promotes a new business model to achieve significant health improvements and to create an effective, efficient and country-led platform for essential health care and public health programmes. The Initiative will improve the health of women and girls by increasing support for global health programmes that focus on the health of women and children. This includes supporting antenatal care, immunization, nutrition, water and sanitation, infectious disease control and family planning, among other health interventions. Maternal health programmes will contribute to saving hundreds of thousands of women's lives by reducing maternal mortality across assisted countries. By addressing an unmet need for contraception, family planning and reproductive health programmes will prevent 54 million unintended pregnancies; seek to achieve a modern contraceptive prevalence rate of 35 per cent, reflecting an average 2 percentage point increase annually; and reduce the number of first births by women under 18 years of age by 20 per cent.

12. The United States Government considers it essential that all health interventions within the Global Health Initiative, including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), ensure that services for women are linked to their primary health-care needs. Gender issues are incorporated into all aspects of PEPFAR prevention, care and treatment programmes, with a commitment to five strategies: increasing gender equity in HIV/AIDS-related activities and services; addressing male norms and behaviours that may worsen the epidemic; reducing violence and coercion against women; increasing women's access to income and productive resources; and strengthening women's legal rights and protection. According to the World Health Organization, AIDS is the leading cause of death among women aged 15 to 44 worldwide, and nearly 60 per cent of persons living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are women.

13. The Global Health Initiative will support long-term, systemic changes to remove barriers and increase access to quality health services including, for

example, by improving monitoring and evaluation of the health of women, adolescents and young girls; supporting integrated health services, where appropriate; encouraging men and boys to be proactive in addressing gender equity; improving training of health providers on gender issues; and engaging civil society in partner countries to address gender equity in health care.[3] The Initiative will also support long-term, systemic changes to remove economic, cultural, social and legal barriers to access to care, and expand opportunities to increase the participation of women in decision-making and quality control in the health sector.

14. The new Presidential Initiative on Global Hunger and Food Security, known as "Feed the Future" (FTF), includes the economic empowerment of women.[4] The Initiative acknowledges that reducing gender inequality is an important contributor to eradicating global hunger and recognizes the fundamental role that women play in achieving food security. The United States Government is committed to giving special attention to gender constraints and opportunities in all FTF investments and partnerships, including those with partner countries to strengthen their capacity to address issues regarding women's access to and control over agricultural assets and how that impacts upon the agricultural value chain. This includes input into agricultural research; equal access to inputs and technology as agricultural producers; gender-appropriate extension packages and delivery; improved access to land and other productive natural assets; reduced gender barriers to financial services; and increased knowledge for men and women enabling them to participate in and obtain appropriate returns from the agricultural system. The capacity to analyse and understand the legal system, including laws, regulations and how they are implemented and enforced, especially in relation to land rights, is often important for ensuring that women and men have equal access.

15. To increase the ability of women to contribute significantly to improved food security, FTF will strive to: (a) ensure that women producers have equal access to assets, inputs and technology; (b) develop agricultural interventions and practices that target both men and women; (c) prioritize labour-saving technologies that benefit women and girls in the home and allow girls to stay in school, and that benefit women in the agricultural arena as producers, processors and marketers of agricultural goods; (d) expand the involvement and participation of women in decision-making at all levels and in all institutions so that they may help lead the formulation of policy, investments, programme design and implementation; (e) improve access to financial services for women in farming and agribusiness; and (f) help women move beyond production by opening up opportunities to engage in the investment-oriented and transformational sides of value chain production.

> *Food security*. The United States global food security programme is a $3.5 billion commitment to strengthen the world's food supply so that farmers can earn enough to support their families and food can be available more broadly. Women are integral to this mission. Most of the world's food is grown, harvested, stored and prepared by women, often in extremely difficult conditions. Giving these women the tools and the

[3] *Implementation of the Global Health Initiative: Consultation Document*, p. 6.

[4] *Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative: Consultation Document*.

training to grow more food and the opportunity to get that food to a market where it can be sold will have a transformative impact on their lives and it will grow the economies of so many countries.[a]

[a] United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, statement to the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, 12 March 2010.

C. Gender in development and diplomacy

16. In order to make progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal on gender equality, specific efforts will need to be accelerated. Experts (including the Secretary-General) have concluded these efforts must embrace simultaneously the following concepts and sectors: gender-based violence, economic empowerment, legal empowerment, health and education. The efforts of the United States Government in these sectors are discussed below.

Gender-based violence

17. Gender-based violence is a global pandemic which cuts across ethnicity, race, class, religion, educational level and international borders. It affects girls and women at every point in their lives and ranges from sex-selective abortion and infanticide, inadequate health care and nutrition given to girls, female genital mutilation, child marriage, rape as a weapon of war, trafficking for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and labour exploitation, domestic violence, so-called "honour" killings, dowry-related murder, to the neglect and ostracism of widows.

18. One in three women worldwide will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime; in some countries, this is true for 70 per cent of women. A 2006 United Nations report found that at least 102 of 192 Member States had no specific laws on domestic violence; others that have laws too often fail to fully implement or enforce them. The United States Government recognizes that there are millions of girls — some estimate as many as 100 million — who are absent from the world's population because of sex-selective abortion, infanticide or because they are denied the nutrition and health care they need to survive past the age of 5. Around the world, women and girls are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, with rape and the fear of relationship violence adding fuel to women's rising infection rate.

19. The United States Government is committed to combating the scourge of violence against women in all its forms and is working with partners to combat gender-based violence by creating economic opportunities for women, advancing educational opportunities and increasing public awareness, among both men and women, of the obstacles that still stand in the way of progress. The United States Government supports efforts to increase legal and judicial protections and the capacity of the health sector to respond to sexual and gender-based violence. In conflict and displacement contexts, the United States Government supports targeted humanitarian assistance to prevent and respond to gender-based violence that occurs during and after conflict and crisis. The United States Government is also strengthening the fight to curb human trafficking and publishes an annual report on human trafficking, and the efforts made by countries to address it, in an effort to

raise awareness and build support to combat this scourge which predominantly affects women and girls. Women need to be active agents of change against gender-based violence and should be at the negotiating table as peacekeepers and peace negotiators, including in conflict resolution and reconstruction efforts.

Case study. The USAID-funded Health Policy Initiative provided technical assistance to the Avances de Paz (Advances of Peace) project in the municipalities of Quillacas, Machareti, Oruro and El Alto in Bolivia. The project built a bottom-up, empowered community movement to integrate local-level family planning and reproductive health policy with efforts to prevent gender-based violence. The four municipalities designed and funded local government plans to organize or strengthen networks against gender-based violence, improve health and legal services available to people affected by gender-based violence and conduct additional awareness-raising activities about other forms of gender-related discrimination and oppression. There were approximately 1,000 participants in the process, 40 per cent of whom were young people. Through the efforts and support of leaders in project municipalities, the project also succeeded in getting the process adopted and implemented in other municipalities.

Case study. The USAID Women's Legal Rights Initiative (2002-2008) worked in close cooperation with government ministries, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations to advance women's legal, civil, property and human rights by improving legislation to protect women's legal rights, enhancing the capacity of the justice sector to interpret and enforce women's legal rights, strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations to advocate for legal protection for women, and increasing public awareness of women's legal rights. Focus countries were Albania, Benin, Guatemala, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and Swaziland.

Significant accomplishments included: support for drafting and the passage of sexual harassment legislation in Benin, and development of anti-trafficking in persons legislation in Mozambique; development of a master's degree programme on gender and the law in Guatemala; public defender and magistrate training in Guatemala; an awareness-raising campaign on the Family Code in Benin; drafting and adoption of a new law on domestic violence in Albania; and incorporating a curriculum on gender-based violence into the training received by Albanian judges and prosecutors, developing a judicial bench book providing guidance to judges and court personnel on dealing with gender-based violence, and improving public awareness and support for women's rights via a country-wide campaign.

Economic empowerment

20. Empowering women economically can lift entire families and communities out of poverty. Women in poor countries are more likely than men to spend their income on food, education and health care for their children; thus, investing in women creates powerful, positive and measurable benefits to society. The United States supports projects and programmes that expand women's economic opportunities and promotes the full participation of women in economic development and a greater understanding of the gender-based constraints to women's participation in economic activities. To date, some key programmes to promote women's economic growth can be categorized into four main areas: small and medium enterprise development, financial inclusion and microfinance, workforce development, and economic policy and governance.

21. *Small and medium-sized enterprise development*. Many microenterprises, particularly those owned by women, face financial barriers when they want to grow. The United States Government understands these barriers, and one way it provides assistance is through the Development Credit Authority (DCA) to encourage lending to creditworthy but underserved sectors. Credit guarantees are a powerful tool for achieving development objectives because they mobilize local capital, mitigate risk and can induce competition as banks realize that these customers can be creditworthy. Since the inception of DCA in 1999, USAID has mobilized $1.8 billion in private sector credit through 239 guarantees, 32 per cent of which are targeted at small and medium-sized enterprises. There are new DCA loan guarantees in Ethiopia and Kenya which focus on assisting women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises.

> *Case study*. A lack of collateral is a symptom that affects most small and medium-sized enterprises, but it is even more profound for women because of cultural and social norms that discourage them from owning property. This is one of the most significant factors driving the inability of women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises from accessing commercial bank finance. In order to address this situation and make commercial bank financing more readily available for women entrepreneurs, USAID Ethiopia obligated a $4.28 million loan portfolio guarantee, in partnership with the Bank of Abyssinia. This reduces collateral requirements and promotes lending exclusively to women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises. This guarantee will assist the legally registered private small and medium-sized enterprises engaged in manufacturing, service, trade and agricultural activities, which are majority-owned and managed by women. USAID Ethiopia will couple the DCA guarantee with technical assistance to help women beneficiaries to better take advantage of the guarantee. Planned assistance includes training to improve management and strategic planning skills; business counselling services, including feasibility studies and market analysis; and facilitation of market linkages to international markets. USAID Ethiopia hopes to use this guarantee to raise awareness of the role of women in the economy. By guaranteeing loans, USAID Ethiopia can demonstrate to the banking community over time that women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises are a viable and profitable sector.

22. *Financial inclusion and microfinance.* Financially inclusive economies are those in which all people have access to a broad range of financial services and products, delivered in a convenient and affordable manner. Support for microfinance and enterprise development has been a cornerstone of United States foreign assistance for more than 25 years. As the largest bilateral donor in microenterprise, USAID annually provides over $200 million for programmes that create large-scale, effective and sustainable microenterprise services for the poor with the aim of reducing poverty and promoting economic growth. Each year, USAID supports microenterprise development programmes in over 70 countries worldwide, through hundreds of implementing partners, to make markets work for more than 6 million households and microentrepreneurs, nearly two thirds of them women. For example, in Afghanistan, USAID is providing women with the tools they need to begin a microbusiness or to take an existing business to the next level of development. As of September 2009, USAID had provided over 108,000 microfinance loans to Afghan women by means of its Agriculture, Rural Investment and Enterprise Strengthening Programme. The Programme has also provided skills training to 4,300 female business owners over the past two years. In addition, the State Department has secured funding for Middle East North Africa (MENA)-Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development programmes with a special focus on women and youth entrepreneurship with a view to tangibly improving the investment climate and expanding opportunities for women and young people in the MENA region. In connection with the multilateral initiative Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas, the United States sponsored a conference for women entrepreneurs in October 2009, which launched a regional mentoring network of women-owned businesses.

23. *Workforce development.* Women are economic drivers. They contribute to global economic growth as farmers, workers, small business owners, chief executive officers, corporate board members, and economic and financial decision makers. However, their contributions are not well recognized, and the positive impact women can bring to economic growth is seriously undervalued. Women need skills training, networking, access to information and assistance with innovations and technologies so that they can leverage those new tools for their economic growth. In Lebanon, United States Government assistance promoted employment and increased the income of rural women through skills, resources, equipment and information, and integration into economic activities in agribusiness and rural tourism. With USAID assistance, more than 2,600 women in El Salvador received agricultural training to raise efficiency and ensure occupational safety; 850 women received trade and investment support to take advantage of Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement opportunities; and 2,155 women were trained in natural resources management and biodiversity conservation.

Case study. The United States Department of Labor funded the implementation by the International Rescue Committee of the three-year Vocational Training for Vulnerable Afghans Project. The project aimed to improve the economic and social well-being of vulnerable groups, such as widows, orphans and young people at risk through vocational training and focused on the provision of competency-based, labour market-driven microenterprise training that produced long-term wage employment or self-employment. In the planning stages, poor women (with a special emphasis on Afghan widows) were defined as a target group to make sure their needs were met. According to the project's final independent evaluation, its impact on women was profound. The evaluation noted that many elements of the project had contributed to the social and economic empowerment of women. These included linking selected female training graduates who wanted to start a small business with a local microfinance facility, supporting female microentrepreneurs in culturally accepted business endeavours, training women in traditionally male occupations, and ensuring a high percentage of women (35 per cent) among the trainers.

As a result of the project's efforts, more than 3,000 persons (33 per cent female and 14 per cent widows) received vocational skills and microenterprise training, and approximately 75 per cent of these trainees successfully transitioned to long-term employment or to microenterprise ownership. In addition to skills training, the project provided microenterprise training that resulted in more than 1,300 persons demonstrating promising entrepreneurial skills (in the last year of the project, 82 per cent of them were women) and functional literacy and numeracy training to 2,122 persons (about 42 per cent female) who had received skills training. The average monthly income of the trainees increased significantly following training. The evaluation noted that the project had a powerful impact on target group beneficiaries and their families.

24. *Economic policy and governance*. The United States is working to identify the legal and institutional constraints for women entrepreneurs, and is providing technical assistance to overcome gender-related barriers in business. A quantitative and qualitative methodology was developed to assess the legal, policy, institutional and societal dimensions of the business and trade environments of a partner country. It is based on a review of the institutions and actors involved in commerce, from high-level government offices and officials to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. This methodology has been successfully applied in over 30 countries to date, and has now been adapted to account for the role of women in economic development. Through this assessment known as GenderCLIR, the United States Government is able to assess gender and the business environment by analysing seven priority areas: social customs and women's role in society, the private sector, labour, credit, property, trade and commercial justice. In the United Republic of Tanzania, for example, USAID is helping to establish a secured lending system based on movable and intangible property. Women often do not have legal title to

land or buildings for use as collateral but can use movable, income-generating property to obtain loans. The new system will provide greater credit access to women.

> *Case study*. Based on proposed criteria for a rural development project in Nicaragua, there was limited opportunity for women's participation because the presumed gender-neutral criteria related to land size, number of cows, beehives or other assets, and primary income sources. Women who wanted to participate would have been excluded because they could not meet these criteria. A gender analysis by the Millennium Challenge Corporation led to a new, more flexible and creative approach. For example, to achieve the minimum number of cows for the dairy activity, the project allowed family members to lend cows to meet the minimum requirement. Women producers without land ownership rights could participate in the project if they could produce documents clarifying their right of use. Business development workshops and technical assistance were offered to women as well as men, whether or not they were land owners. Because of this change, women's participation in various aspects of the programme increased, often dramatically. For example, in the livestock project, women's participation increased from 8 per cent to 22 per cent in some locations.

25. Economic programmes targeting women in these areas are even more critical during the global economic crisis. Women in developing countries are likely to bear a disproportionate burden in an economic crisis. According to the United Nations Development Programme, women make up a majority of the world's poor. Women produce more than one half of the world's food and are economically active. However, 60 per cent or more of economically active women across the globe are employed in the informal market and their contributions are often not recognized. The United States is committed to economically empowering women, as they can play a major role in rebuilding and growing the world economy.

Legal empowerment

26. Transformational development is not possible without the active and equal participation of women. The rule of law and access to justice by women and men are essential for sustained economic growth, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger. Unfortunately, legal and customary barriers often prevent women from exercising their full legal rights and from enjoying legal protections.

27. Legal and customary restrictions on women's ownership of land and property also continue to hamper their ability to acquire productive assets and to reduce their vulnerability when family crisis or some other calamity strikes. In Rwanda, USAID promoted a more gender-equitable land policy to improve the law itself and to train parliamentarians in interpreting and enforcing the law. This has been particularly important during the country's reconstruction as the Government has granted land access to women displaced, widowed or otherwise affected by the conflict. This activity combines strengthening women's right to land to promote economic growth,

and legislative strengthening to promote property and other laws more supportive of women's rights and needs. Under Millennium Challenge Corporation-funded land projects, the titles to more than 50 per cent of the parcels in Nicaragua and 40 per cent of the parcels in Ghana are in the names of women. Recognizing that women are not likely to have control of land being irrigated and under title family, the Mali Compact ensures that the titles to 10 per cent of newly irrigated land are allocated to women's groups for market gardens. This ensures that women will be able to control this important asset and the income from crops grown on this land.

28. The United States helps countries to address barriers to women's participation in formal employment, promotes efforts to enforce laws and regulations which protect women's rights at work, ensures women's access to financial services, such as credit and savings, improves the nature and conditions of the work that women do, provides adequate protections when women leave the labour market and works to enable women to gain secure access to land. The United States works to increase public awareness of women's legal rights, and promotes local ownership of legal reforms by building support for women's legal rights through host country civil society organizations and legislative and judicial branches of government. Concerning legally binding treaties that help empower women, the United States has signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the ratification if that Convention is a high priority for the present Administration.

Case study. In Colombia, the civil society-led campaign, "Más Mujeres, Más Política" (More Women, More Politics) aimed to increase the participation of women in government. The campaign developed draft legislation to ensure the representation of women on party ballots at the national, departmental and municipal levels. In addition, USAID trained over 3,000 women on issues related to political parties, including their management and operations.

Case study. In Jordan, working closely with the Judicial Institute and the Ministry of Justice in revising the curriculum and admissions criteria, USAID contributed to increasing the number of female students in the judicial diploma programme from 4.4 per cent during the period from 1990 to 2004, to 46 per cent during the period from 2006 to 2008, thus eventually increasing the number of female judges. In addition, USAID supported the judges' fund which provides 200 scholarships for law students, with more than 50 per cent going to females.

Case study. MCC worked with the Government of Lesotho to ensure that gender equality in economic rights was legally guaranteed before signing its Compact. Prior to the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act of December 2006, married women in Lesotho were legally minors, which limited their political, economic and social rights. At that time, they could not enter into a contract and incur a debt, they could not register immovable property in their name, and they could not buy, sell or use property as collateral for loans without the explicit permission of their husbands or other male relatives.

To further ensure that these new rights would become a reality, MCC required that the Government of Lesotho identify and reform other laws so that they were in harmony with the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act. In addition, there is a US$ 1 million gender equality project being implemented under the Compact. The project is conducting training on the new laws for members of government, including the civil and for customary law judiciary, and for other institutions, such as the churches and the banking industry. They also have a countrywide programme to reach deeply into rural society and institutions, including chiefs and community councils, to advocate and teach the benefits of gender equality for the development of the Basotho people. One councilman noted that he had seen married couples planning together, communicating and taking each other's perspectives seriously; that, he said, was progress.

Health

29. Gender plays an integral and explicit role in the design of many USAID health programmes. Because of women's roles in child rearing, providing and seeking care, and managing water and nutrition, their ability to access health-related knowledge and services is fundamental to the health of their babies, older children and other family members. Over the long term, the health of women enhances their productivity and social and economic participation and also acts as a positive multiplier, benefiting social and economic development by improving the health of future generations. Moreover, both because of their reproductive role and patterns of gender discrimination, girls and women are particularly vulnerable to ill health and are comparatively underserved by health services. The special needs of women and girls are an integral part of the global health work of USAID, encompassing programmes in family planning and reproductive health, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, child survival, nutrition and infectious diseases.

30. USAID family planning and reproductive health programmes focus on six technical priority areas: contraceptive security, community-based access; healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy; long-acting and permanent methods; integration of family planning into maternal and child health; and HIV programmes. Maternal health-care programmes build the capacity of skilled birth attendants and reduce the major causes of maternal death. USAID addresses gender issues in HIV/AIDS in coordination with PEPFAR by: increasing gender equity in HIV/AIDS activities and services; reducing violence and coercion; addressing male norms and behaviour;

increasing women's access to income and productive resources; and increasing legal rights and protection. Another major focus of USAID programming is improving the nutrition of women and adolescent girls. The improvement of girls' nutritional status has been shown to have a positive affect on their survival and productivity, as well as the health and survival of their children. USAID child survival programmes protect children from the major causes of infant and child mortality by increasing the coverage of such services as immunization, prevention of diarrhoea, treatment of pneumonia, and vitamin A supplementation. In places where gender analysis reveals differential access to child health services for girl children, USAID programmes specifically work to overcome this gender constraint. The USAID Global Health Bureau also tackles traditional practices of female genital cutting and child marriage. Finally, USAID global health programmes target infectious diseases, as biological differences between men and women can affect vulnerability to certain infectious diseases, while gender norms, cultural practices and behaviours can strongly influence disease prevention and care-seeking, as well as access to treatment.

Case study. The PEPFAR Gender Initiative to Reduce Adolescent Girls' Vulnerability to HIV, also known as the Go Girls! Initiative, is being implemented by the Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs in Mozambique, Botswana and Malawi. This PEPFAR initiative seeks to develop, implement and test multifaceted interventions to reduce girls' susceptibility to HIV infection. Programmatic approaches to the initiative include working with a wide range of stakeholders to record interventions and identify gaps; introducing innovative approaches and strengthening existing programmes that address key drivers of the epidemic for vulnerable girls; promoting multifaceted and integrated programming, taking into consideration structural factors (such as access to education, health services and economic opportunities); and conducting a rigorous evaluation.

Case study. Bihar is one of the least developed and most populous states in India and home to a burgeoning youth population. The median age of first marriage is 15 among women aged 20-49 years, with 81 per cent married before the legally mandated age of 18. The contraceptive prevalence rate of 34 per cent is less than two thirds of the national average (56 per cent), and is associated with a total fertility rate of 4 children per woman, much higher than the national average of 2.7. This pattern of reproduction — too early and too close together — adversely affects the health and overall status of women, the survival and development of children and the economic well-being of families.

The Operations Research Study (ORS) is a collaboration between USAID and the comprehensive, community-based behaviour change PRACHAR Project, which is implemented by Pathfinder International and the Government of India, with funding from the Packard Foundation and the United Nations Population Fund. ORS seeks to develop an enhanced, multisectoral, gendered approach to the very successful PRACHAR

project model, and to evaluate the impact on family planning and reproductive health outcomes and gender equality. The ORS population is approximately 10,000 adolescents and 20,000 parents and community leaders.

Education

31. Education is a priority for the United States Government, with special emphasis on improving opportunities for girls, women, and other underserved and disadvantaged populations. In the fiscal year 2009, nearly 24 million girls benefited from United States Government programmes in primary and secondary education. President Obama asserted in June 2009 that he believed that a woman denied an education was denied equality.

32. The United States Government assists developing countries to improve access to and the quality of education, including in fragile, conflict or emergency-affected States. USAID builds country capacity, constructs schools, trains teachers and administrators, improves curricula, engages the community, and helps girls and other marginalized populations to go to school. Quality basic education establishes a foundation for increased educational opportunities, employment and civic participation. The United States Government works to coordinate assistance to each subsector: basic and higher education and workforce development.

33. Gender inequalities in education vary by country and region and must be addressed with country and situation-specific approaches. USAID education programmes take gender dynamics, inequalities and roles into consideration during programme design, implementation and evaluation. Specific USAID-supported activities to increase access and create more equitable learning environments for all students include providing scholarships and mentoring to girls; developing bias-free curricula; training teachers to treat boys and girls equitably; and working with community leaders to mobilize local support for girls' education.

34. The United States Government, through USAID, will continue to design programme interventions that work towards achieving gender equality in education. In Bangladesh, USAID is supporting the television programme *Sesame Street* with the aim of broadening perceptions of men's and women's roles in an effort to expand the range of future opportunities for girls and boys. The programme, which provides preschool education and reaches over 9 million viewers weekly, includes episodes that showcase competencies and successes of women as engineers, doctors, pilots and writers and show men in traditional women's roles. In Jordan, in an effort to encourage women and girls to pursue careers in information and communications technology, USAID is supporting a public-private partnership among the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Cisco Systems and the Government of Jordan. In Nicaragua, the USAID education programme offers girls and boys the opportunity to participate on an equal basis in the classroom by working in mixed groups and by assigning boys and girls leadership roles in each group.

Case study. In the MCC-funded programme in El Salvador, a gender diagnostic which assessed the educational needs of young men and women led to the modification of scholarship programmes and both formal and informal vocational training programmes. The changes made it easier for girls, single mothers and other women to participate, in both traditional and non-traditional areas. These modifications contributed to higher than expected interest, enrolment and participation in these programmes, particularly among underserved groups. Nearly 60 per cent of current vocational programme participants are young women.

Case study. The Safe Schools Programme was a five-year initiative funded by USAID. The objective of the programme was to reduce school-related, gender-based violence to improve educational outcomes and reduce negative health outcomes in 40 communities, both in Ghana and in Malawi, focusing on male and female students in upper primary and lower secondary school, ranging in age from 10 to 14 years. The comprehensive approach to this problem involved teachers, parents, students, community members and local non-profit organizations on the one hand, and government officials from education, health, social welfare and security on the other. Codes of conduct, including standards for ethics, teachers' roles and responsibilities towards students, and reporting systems for code violations were developed in collaboration with ministries of education and teachers' unions. Communities were involved in finding ways to prevent and respond to violence by: (a) reducing child labour, corporal punishment, sexual relations between teachers and schoolchildren, and sexual harassment; and (b) providing private, clean and secure lavatories at schools and safe routes to and from schools. Among the most significant impacts were that teachers' awareness of sexual harassment of girls and boys at school increased and they became more aware of how to report school-related, gender-based violence. In addition, teachers' attitudes towards acceptability of physical violence changed and students became more confident that they had the right to not be hurt or mistreated.

Case study. For the past 15 years, the United States Department of Labor has funded 235 projects, at a total cost of $677.8 million, to combat child labour in more than 75 countries. As a result, 1.3 million children have been prevented from being subject to labour exploitation or have been removed from exploitive labour conditions in such sectors as commercial agriculture, mining and small-scale manufacturing, as well as domestic work, forced labour and trafficking. These projects have given girls from the most disadvantaged groups the opportunity to receive an education and other social support that will help to transform their future into one of opportunity. For example, in Ecuador, the Department is funding a four-year, $4 million project to combat indigenous child labour. The project has developed a participatory approach which provides accelerated education and after-school programmes to children who work

or those who are at risk of working; offers training for teachers to enhance their skills; raises awareness of child labour among parent and community members; and encourages community participation in programme design and implementation. In Colombia, the Department funds a 39-month, $5 million project that uses an innovative after-school education programme, Espacios para Crecer (Space for Growth), to withdraw and prevent 10,200 children from the worst forms of child labour. In 2009, the Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization selected Espacios para Crecer as a best practice in programmes for young people. This initiative, which is based on a model originally developed in the Dominican Republic by DevTechSystems, Inc., is implemented by an association led by Partners of the Americas.

D. Good practices, policy recommendations and challenges

35. The United States remains committed to the principles of aid effectiveness which are the foundation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. That is, the United States Government believes in the need for country-led and country-owned development initiatives, effective partnerships for development, and measuring the results of development programmes. A true partnership with the host country Government, civil society and legislative bodies is a key ingredient to ensuring that development gains are sustainable over the long term. The United States clearly has certain development priorities and is well aware that without host country engagement, programmes are unlikely to succeed. In addition, the United States Government is actively seeking partnerships with multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations, private institutions and other donors in order to maximize the benefit and effectiveness of aid dollars. Partnering with organizations that have capacity and expertise in selective areas is an excellent way to divide the work, ensure coordination and prevent duplication of effort. Finally, the United States Government is committed to mutual accountability for tangible results.

36. Based on its programming experiences throughout the world, the United States has learned the importance of integrating a gender-based perspective into all aspects of its development work. Issues as complex and important as women's empowerment and gender equality cannot be addressed in a compartmentalized fashion; rather, progress can only be made when they are tackled on numerous fronts and when gender issues are kept at the forefront of all aspects of development policy and practice. Success can only be achieved when the issue is faced on both a macrolevel (e.g., national laws on women's rights) and a microlevel (e.g., educating local populations as to the benefits of gender equality).

37. Similarly, the United States Government has learned that seemingly gender-neutral policies may have gender-biased implications in practice, as they may perpetuate rather than ameliorate existing gender disparities. Gender-blind criteria may not take into account the often different and unequal circumstances of women in developing societies. It is precisely because of these lessons that the United States Government recognizes that women's participation in all parts of the development

process is essential, from the initial planning phase, to implementation, through to monitoring and evaluation and learning from results.

38. Moreover, women in fragile and post-conflict States need particular attention from the global community. All evidence shows that these women are often in the most precarious of positions, both in terms of gender-based violence and descent into poverty. Making progress in regard to women's empowerment must definitely include the protection of women in conflict and post-conflict States.

E. Conclusions and outlook for the future

39. With only five years until the 2015 milestone for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the United States remains committed to sustaining development gains and will focus on innovation as a key means of accelerating progress towards achieving the Goals. The 2015 milestone is an opportunity to celebrate what has been achieved, as well as focus on what remains to be done. Gender is a critical cross-cutting theme in United States initiatives to achieve development milestones, including the new Presidential initiatives on global health and food security, because women play a central role in creating sustainable development outcomes. The United States Government has and will continue to integrate gender concerns throughout its development work in areas such as gender-based violence, economic empowerment, legal empowerment and women's leadership, health and education. The United States believes that *gender-inclusive development is the right way to do business — for donor agencies, developing countries, non-governmental organizations and the private sector*. The General Assembly, at its high-level plenary meeting to be held in September 2010, will bring world leaders, non-governmental organizations, the business community and other civil society representatives together to galvanize efforts to accelerate progress in regard to the Millennium Development Goals. The United States Government believes that it is imperative that the issue of women's empowerment and equality remain at the forefront, and looks forward to joining with other Member States to continue this important work.